

It seems I owe Ken Keathley an apology.

In Ken Keathley and the cancer of compromise, I stated that

“Old-earth creationists seem to have an obsession with [George McCready] Price and over-emphasize his influence upon those of us who actually believe that God created the universe in six days, and that the global flood was actually, well, global.”

I asserted that Seventh Day Adventism[1] has nothing to do with young-earth creationists’ belief in the Bible’s straightforward record of history, and that

“Price’s rejection of billions of years of geological prehistory in favor of a relatively recent creation happens to be consistent with the biblical record of history; such has nothing at all to do with his own adherence to Adventism.”

After scolding old-earth creationists for their continual reminder of George McCready Price’s influence on Henry Morris and other early young-earth creation scientists and OECs’ desire to unjustly taint young-earth creationism with the legacy of Price and his Seventh Day Adventism, I was confronted with Jerry Bergman’s biographical sketch of Price in the March/April 2019 issue of *Creation Matters*, a publication of the Creation Research Society.[2]

While I stand by my statements above and surely find it less than useful for old-earth creationists to repeatedly commit this guilt by association (*ad hominem*) fallacy, Dr. Bergman (himself a YEC) shows no reluctance to connect the modern creation movement to the writings of Price. And in this particular article, Price’s Adventism is not even mentioned.

Bergman writes:

“Price was a pioneer. Although some of his ideas were incorrect, he was nonetheless very influential in the conservative religious community. This was true partly because his writings prominently appeared in several conservative religious periodicals (Lindberg and Numbers, 1986, p. 400). One Science editor described

him as ‘the principal scientific authority of the Fundamentalists’ (Price, 1926, p. 259). He gave thousands of lectures on his research, mostly to students, influencing a whole generation of creationists (Lindberg and Numbers, 1986, p. 400).”[3]

Clearly, Price was an important figure in the development of the movement which became known for a time as “scientific creationism”. But whether one chooses to emphasize Price’s scientific acumen (which is debated by some) and influence, or chooses instead to acknowledge his Adventist beliefs and downplay his credentials and impact on the movement, the fact remains that “young-earth creationism” (that is, biblical creationism) depends on neither the scientific research of early pioneers nor the doctrinal distinctives of Seventh Day Adventism. As has been repeatedly shown, the doctrine of six-day creation and a global catastrophic flood are the clear teachings of Scripture, and therefore predate the teaching of Morris, Whitcomb, Price (etc.) by centuries (See, for example, **A theologian’s disappointing departure from biblical creation**, *Journal of Creation* 28(3):120-127, 2014, and, **Faltering between two opinions: The epistemological conundrum of old-earth creationism; book review of *Controversy of the Ages*, by Theodore J. Cabal and Peter J. Rasor II**, *Journal of Creation* 31(3):28-32, 2017).

Prior to reading Dr. Bergman’s recent article, I had only seen old-earth creationists and evolutionary creationists give such attention to Price and his legacy, seemingly hoping it would cast the origins of the modern young-earth creationist movement in a bad light. Bergman’s documentation shows that Price did have an influence on the work of Morris and others, however, at least in terms of *geology*.

So, I apologize for singling out OECs (like Ken Keathley) for their love of crediting Price for his influence on young-earth creationism.

But this leads to an issue of far greater importance.

Whereas I would contend that whatever Henry Morris, Walter Lammerts and other leaders of the early modern creationist movement had picked up from Price in terms of geological research is not relevant to the Scriptures’ clear testimony about creation week, anthropology and geology, my guess is that Dr. Bergman would rather praise Price for his contributions to the evidentialists’ apologetic arsenal despite Price’s adherence to Adventist theology in the same way that Bergman applauds C.S. Lewis for his opposition to Darwinism, despite Lewis’ Anglo-Catholicism (see *On the praise of heretics: C.S. Lewis, anti-*

Darwinist and anti-Protestant).

In other words, apologetic method is directly related to one's theology. If one is of the opinion that the study of so-called "objective evidence" is sufficient to bring about conversion, then why not draw the relevant evidence from any source available, orthodox or not?

I am persuaded that while the creation movement in general has matured in terms of epistemology, it still remains inconsistent, resulting in the tendency of its latent evidentialism to sometimes rise to the surface.

I have no desire to speak ill of Dr. Bergman, and I appreciate his extensive research into various fields of study and the mountain of literature he has produced for creationist organizations in general and for CMI in particular. Instead, I want us to consider this two-part question: *If* C.S. Lewis and George McCready Price were wrong about how to obtain justification before a holy and righteous God, can they still be considered allies in the spiritual battle and the Great Commission? And if their heterodoxy does not preclude their usefulness in "winning the lost" because they have added to our stockpile of "evidence of creation", I wonder, to what degree has pragmatism and pelagianism overrun our evangelistic endeavors?

I have been hanging on to a 2014 letter of Dr. Bergman's written in response to a Creation Research Society member concerned with his apologetic method. God willing, a more detailed examination of this flawed method will eventually be completed and published in the *Journal of Creation*, but for now, see if you can spot the problems with what I have called the "Evidentialist's Golden Chain of Redemption". Dr. Bergman writes:

"In the two books of personal testimonies which I co-edited...a major theme is the importance of a study of the evidence against evolution and for creation, in one's going first from atheism to creationism, and then to Christianity; or in going from theistic evolution...to creationism.

*...Unless one is already a believer, **this goal is not achieved by scriptural evidence**, but through a study of creation.... My experience with higher education confirms that **this is the only approach that works**.*

...God gave us a biotic message that proves His existence by the clear evidence in a universe that was designed to convey to humans that life did not evolve, but rather was designed.”[4]

For someone as bright as Dr. Bergman, he seems to be unaware that an appeal to “evidence” in the way he does here assumes the validity of the epistemology known as empiricism. Bergman should know that evidence does not speak for itself but is always interpreted in light of theory.

Secondly, the goal of getting a stone-hearted unregenerate God-hating rebel to progress from “atheism to creationism...to Christianity” is hardly the biblical method of evangelism, nor is it the pattern followed by the apostles, nor is it consistent with the Bible’s *ordo salutis*. Note also that convincing someone that “life did not evolve, but rather was designed” does not logically require that the designer be identified as the God of the Bible. Perhaps Allah is the designer, or Gaia, or a host of gods. The Great Commission is not to make creationists, but to make disciples.

Saddest of all is Bergman’s assessment of the Word of God as insufficient to accomplish what he thinks is so important (to make atheists into theists). His “experience” says that an empirically-based apologetic “is the only approach that works”. So much for the sufficiency of Scripture.

Contra Bergman, God declares through the prophet Isaiah:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

My plea to my fellow young-earth creationists is this: Spend more time studying theology and less time studying science, stop appealing to the failed epistemology of empiricism, and stop divorcing evangelism from apologetics. A systematic approach to theology which acknowledges the sovereignty of God and the depravity of man would enable us to

confidently and consistently depend upon God's Word—not for the conversion of atheists into theists, but for the raising of dead men to life.

*“**And you were dead** in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **even when we were dead** in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ” (Eph. 2:1-5).*

[1] There has long been, and continues to be, strong disagreement over whether the Seventh Day Adventist Church should be characterized as a cult or a denomination of Protestantism. Besides the debate over whether or not Ellen G. White's writings should be regarded as authoritative, there is also much debate “concerning the meaning of such doctrines as atonement, sin, Christ's nature, authority, and especially, the meaning of righteousness by faith” (Samples, K.R., The recent truth about Seventh-day Adventism, *Christianity Today*, Feb. 5, 1990, p. 8). Researcher Edmond Gruss wrote that, “Of the many groups that have been identified as cults, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the most puzzling for the researcher. Evaluations of this group range from strong opposition to approval with reservations” (*Cults and the Occult* 4th ed., P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 2002, p. 105).

[2] Bergman, J., George McCready Price: An important early creationist, *Creation Matters* 24(2):1-4, 2019.

[3] Bergman, p. 3.

[4] Bergman, J., letter to the editor (Bergman's reply), *Creation Matters* 19(5):5, 2014.

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